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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 004740

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TAGS: [PARM](#) [NATO](#) [UNSC](#) [IR](#) [CZ](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: CZECH DEPUTY FM VISITS BEIJING, DEFENDS U.S.-CZECH
MISSILE DEFENSE PLANS

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR AUBREY CARLSON, REASONS 1.4
B AND D.

¶1. (C) Summary: Czech Republic First Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar defended the Czech Republic's negotiations with the United States on participation in a U.S. or NATO missile defense system in a July 18 speech in Beijing. He said the Czech Republic's discussions with the United States on basing a missile defense radar in the Czech Republic are based on the belief that Iran poses a real threat to Czech security in the medium term, and that the Czech Republic believes that a missile defense system that covers only North America would damage NATO and EU security. He described Russian objections to the Czech Republic's participation as "contradictory" because the Russians stress both the destabilizing nature of a NATO (or U.S.) missile defense system in Europe and the ease with which any infrastructure on Czech territory could be destroyed. Asked about Czech public opinion of the possibility of siting a missile defense radar on Czech soil, DFM Pojar acknowledged that 60 percent of Czech citizens oppose it, but said that the issue is a relatively low priority for Czech citizens, and the Czech government plans to "educate" them. End Summary.

Speech at CIIS on U.S.-Czech Missile Defense Cooperation

¶2. (SBU) Visiting Czech First Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar gave a speech July 18 to about 30 Chinese MFA arms control officials, think tank scholars and third-country ambassadors at the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), an MFA-affiliated think tank. The subject of the speech was "The Czech Republic's Cooperation with the United States on Missile Defense." DFM Pojar spoke extemporaneously in English and answered several questions from the audience.

¶3. (C) Prior to the speech, Czech Ambassador Vitezslav Grepel told Poloff that the primary purpose of DFM Pojar's visit is to advocate for China's support for the Czech Republic's bid for a 2008-2009 UN Security Council seat. Chinese officials expressed intense interest in the Czech Republic's possible participation in a U.S. or NATO missile defense system in Europe and asked for a more detailed briefing on the discussions. This was the genesis of the speech at CIIS, he said.

¶4. (C) In his speech, DFM Pojar said he is the primary negotiator for the Czech Republic in its negotiations with

the United States over the possible siting of a missile defense radar installation on Czech soil. The final decision, he emphasized, will have to be made by the Czech Parliament, per the Czech Constitution, and with that in mind the Czech government has decided to be as open and transparent as possible about the negotiations, and about the Czech Republic's interests in the matter.

Missile Defense Necessary to Guard Against Iran

15. (C) DFM Pojar said he believes that a missile defense system incorporating a radar in the Czech Republic and 10 interceptors in Poland would strengthen the capacity and capability of NATO to deal with a missile threat from the Middle East, particularly Iran. He said he believes that such a system will be built one way or the other; the only variable is whether the territory protected is North America only or includes Europe as well.

16. (C) DFM Pojar told Poloff the issue of the DPRK came up in his meetings with Chinese officials. The DPRK represents "no primary threat" to the Czech Republic, but the possibility that the DPRK will supply nuclear weapons to the Middle East, specifically Iran, is "a great fear." In his speech, he said Iran is the Czech Republic's biggest missile-related worry. Iran's "past, present and future plans" represent a serious threat to Europe and a reason to "bulk up" purely defensive systems such as the missile defense system currently under discussion. Possible future instability in Pakistan leading to the loss of control of missiles or nuclear weapons is another threat to consider.

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17. (C) Alternative proposals to base radar and interceptor stations in "the northwest or southeast" are not workable, he explained. Siting the facilities in northwestern Europe would leave central Europe unprotected, and siting them in the Caucasus region would be "technologically ineffective."

18. (C) In response to a question from the Deputy Director General of the PRC Arms Control and Disarmament Association, another think tank partially affiliated with the MFA, DFM Pojar admitted that the Czech Republic and Russia have fundamental disagreements over the degree of the current threat from the Middle East and the potential for strategic imbalance created by the missile defense system. "We cannot rule out a missile threat from Iran within the next ten years," DFM Pojar said, "and we recognize that it will take five years or more to make the missile defense system operational." The Russians claim that a missile threat from the Middle East is not realistic for decades, at least. DFM Pojar said he explained to the Russians that the small-scale missile defense system envisioned would only be able to destroy a few incoming missiles and therefore would have no effect on Russia's strategic forces.

Czech Interests

19. (C) The Czech Republic believes that the United States plans to build a missile defense network no matter what Europe decides about its own participation, Pojar said. A system that protects only one side of the Atlantic, leaving the United States and Canada secure but Europe vulnerable, is clearly not in NATO's interests. The Czech Republic relies 100 percent on NATO for its security, and wants to see it strong. He added, "We want to cooperate with the United States to ensure that if multiple missiles are launched, the one headed for Prague is among the first destroyed."

Russian Opposition Logic is "Contradictory"

110. (C) DFM Pojar characterized the Russian arguments as

contradictory. The Russians, he said, claim that the proposed system is "strategically destabilizing." They also claim that it will never work, and that if it does work, the Russian military can easily destroy the installations on Czech soil in the event of a conflict. If the system is both fragile and unlikely to work, he said, how can it contribute to strategic instability? Mutually assured nuclear destruction would not be affected by ten interceptors in Poland. Asked by a Chinese audience member if the U.S.-Czech negotiations are responsible for "serious measures of retaliation" from Russia, DFM Pojar said Russian intransigence on the Kosovo question, Russian forces in Moldova and Georgia and "incidents" in Estonia show that Russian "measures" are independent of his negotiations with the United States.

Major Obstacle is Czech Public Opinion

¶11. (C) The major obstacle to a radar site in the Czech Republic is popular opposition, he said. Polls have shown 60 percent of Czech citizens are against hosting a U.S. radar site, with 25-30 percent in favor. This is normal public opposition to military installations in a time of peace, DFM Pojar said, and lags far behind jobs, education and social issues on the public's priority list. He hopes to be able to "educate" the public on the issue and win their support. No matter what the outcome of the USG-Czech negotiations over the radar and a Status of Forces Agreement, the final decision belongs to the Czech Parliament. Wild rumors about the proposal, such as one saying a nuclear reactor will be built next to the radar site to provide power, are rampant, he said, and "coordinated" by those opposed to the missile defense plan.

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